

January 14, 1985

system, which, quite frankly, I was reluctant to go along with at the time but I did to test out, or you can have the other things develop through artificial means, a bulge here, a crisis there. I submit to you that the best way is to keep some strength in the committees and, yes, this is a direct, so to speak, confrontation in a sense between the committee structure and the Speaker. Traditionally, the Speaker of the Legislature has been somewhat more an honorary thing and less a complete dictator as in many other governments. If the priority is left almost totally in the hands of the Speaker as opposed to the committees, which would tend to develop from this rule change, then I think you are moving in a completely different direction on the Speaker, strengthening him tremendously which may or may not be your choice, and weakening the committee structure, which may or may not be your choice. But that is what you are doing. I would say it is better to leave it the status quo. The Speaker has incredible power with his 25 priority bills already that he may select. I personally had a motion in or a proposal to have that power go to the Exec Board so a group of senators could decide. I withdrew that just a few minutes ago on the theory that let things be as they are, they have worked fairly well. I would suggest that we reject this particular rule change. It has nothing to do with the Speaker or anything else. Has to do with the system that is working fairly well and you are going to change it if you adopt this rule change and you are going to create bulges that will create a lot more loss of time than just sticking with what we have got.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Higgins.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to ask the Speaker a question. Mr. Speaker, now many committees do we have that would have priority bills? Would the Select Committees have them also?

SPEAKER NICHOL: Yes, I believe they have. Let's see, 14, 15, 16, 17, I could be off one or so but I would say 17.

SENATOR HIGGINS: We have got about 17 committees then.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Seventeen or eighteen.

SENATOR HIGGINS: So that would be 34 or 36. And could I ask, Mr. President or Mr. O'Donnell how many bills have